5: Allen H-4 (no date) 1923 RH1 Caucasia
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ont naturellement beaucoup d'esprit; l'on en feroit des gens savants et des grands maîtres, si on les élevoit dans les sciences et dans les arts; mais l'éducation qu'on leur donne étant fort méchante, et n'ayant que de mauvais exemples, ils deviennent très ignorans et très vicieux. Ils sont fourbes, fripons, perfides, traîtres, ingrats, superbes. . . . Outre ces vices de l'esprit, ils ont ceux de la sensualité les plus sales, l'ivrognerie et la luxure. Ils se plongent d'autant plus avant dans ces saletés, qu'elles sont communes et nullement déshonnêtes en Géorgie. . . . Pour le reste, les Géorgiens ont de la civilité et de l'humanité, et de plus ils sont graves et modérés."

The life of the Georgian gentleman was passed entirely in hunting, in war and in the satisfaction of personal feuds; from the age of four years he was brought up to horsemanship and the use of arms; every man was a past-master with the bow and lance. They hunted the jackal and the fox with hounds, but their favourite pastime was hawking, their principal game being cranes, herons and pheasants. After the chase the company would give themselves up to feasting and drinking. A main item of diet was *gom*, a kind of porridge made with millet, which formed almost the sole nourishment of the peasants, and was a much-appreciated course at the tables of the gentry. They had little fish except tunny and salt-fish imported from Trebizond and Kaffa, but ate many varieties of meat, the most abundant of which was pork, then venison, beef, mutton and hare.

At any great feast it was a point of honour to become intoxicated, and he who failed in this respect was considered to be a poor fellow. The lower classes, however, were often miserably fed, and the standard of their living was a very low one.

Georgian was a literary language, at least from the time of Pharnavaz, who is said to have introduced the Georgian alphabet, derived, like the Armenian, through the Pahvli and Zend, from the Aramæan. The earliest extant examples of Georgian writing are copies of the Bible, lives of the Saints and other sacred works.

The Mongol and later Mussulman wars effectually checked the natural development of Georgian intellectual life, and to the separation from the philosophical and educational influences of Western Europe must be attributed much of the illiteracy, coarseness and lack of idealism of the Georgian aristocracy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What little literary culture there was in the country was the preserve of

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

Georgi Bistlauri, related that twelve years ago two of his cousins, on their way to the sanctuary, bought from a Khevsur a lamb for one ruble and twenty kopeks. One of them paid his part of sixty kopeks, but the other, not having the money with him at the time, promised to pay after one year. But he did not keep his word, and the creditor chose a *mzevali,* who in turn chose another, and he another, etc. After twelve years the sixty kopeks of the original debt, the price of the half lamb, was transformed into that of sixty cows, or its equivalent—six hundred rubles—which makes one thousand times the original sum. Eristov[6] gives the following information concerning *mzevali:* "If a person does not pay a debt, or does not meet the obligations required by justice, the offended person goes to a stranger (who has no interest or connection with the proceedings), gives him as a gift one ruble and twenty kopeks, and proclaims him his *mzevali,* and in the meantime takes from him the whole amount of the debt owing to him by the prosecuted person. Three years after his appointment, the *mzevali* goes to the debtor and demands from him, instead of one ruble, twenty-one rubles. . . . In the event the debtor refuses to pay, the *mzevali* approaches another person as *mzevali* and takes from him the sum of money which he should have received from the debtor. In such a manner the office of *mzevali* may be transferred from one person to another, going to as many as twenty or thirty persons, and the debt multiplies twenty times every three years.

As contracts of partnership, we may consider also the rules relating to agriculture, fishing, and hunting.

There are no special restrictions for fishing. Fish are caught in various ways. When the Khevsurs or Tushes catch a large fish, the man who catches it gets the head, and the rest is divided into equal parts among the other fishermen.

Hunting is also free to the Georgian Highlanders.

Among the Khevsurs,[7] who love the dangerous sport of hunting mountain goats, when two or more hunters take part in an expedition, the pelt of the slain animal belongs to the hunter who kills it, the horns are given to the *khati* of the community as a

[6] Eristov: 133.
[7] *Ibid.,* 127.

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thank-offering for the success of the hunt, and the flesh is divided equally among all the hunters.

The Svans have especially elaborate customs connected with hunting, which they regard as a sacred affair. The religious character of the hunt is explained by their belief in the existence of deities for the protection of game and hunters. The hunters are respected by the people who consider them fortunate in enjoying the favor of the deities. According to their conviction, not everyone may succeed in the hunt, but only those who are known for their irreproachable conduct and high morality. The hunter must live a clean life and be careful in his relations with women, who are regarded as unclean. The hunter must have no intercourse with other women than his wife. Even with her he is obliged to cease relations one day before the hunting expedition. He has no right to start for the hunt when any woman in his own family is having monthly issue, nor even if such a woman be one of his own neighbors. It is also necessary for him to avoid the proximity of women with new-born babies until they have been purified by a priest.

Besides avoiding women, the hunter must pay his respects to the killed game and treat the horns, bones, and other parts of the carcass with reverence. If he does not, the hunter will be punished by the god of the hunt, who will make him unsuccessful in all his undertakings. Thus, for example, one hunter from the community of Ushkul, related[8] that ever since his brother became angry at something and threw the leg of a wild goat which he had killed into the dung-heap, he always suffer failure in the hunt.

The hunter goes alone or is accompanied by a helper, who carries his arms and other things and whose duty it is to bring home the game. He has the special name of *mikatsiri*, meaning "the carrier of the leader sack;" the word *katsi* meaning sack.

When the hunter reaches the place of his destination, where he has decided to hunt, he lights candles, fixes them upon a tree or stone along with burning coals, and throws on them the pieces of beeswax. If he has brought flour instead of bread, he bakes

[8] Dmitriev: 168.

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cakes from it. After this, facing the east, he kneels upon his right knee and with bread and brandy in his hands he prays to the deity of the hunt and the patron of game—the goddess *Dal*, asking her for help and success in the hunt. The Svans[9] represent her as a woman of great beauty who lives on the summits of the mountains.

After the prayer the hunter eats his bread, and if he is accompanied by a helper, he gives half the bread to him and they eat it with care and reverence, sacramentally. After this, the hunt begins.

If the Svan hunter succeeds in killing an animal, which he considers to be a special favor of the deity, he kindles a fire and skins the animal. He removes the inside parts of the animal, cleans them, and fixing the heart and liver on a wooden spit, fries them and brings them as a thank-offering to the deity.

After this the hunter and his assistant have their meal; then they divide the spoils. According to ancient custom, the head, neck and pelt belong to the hunter, and the rest is divided equally between them, with the assistant having the right of choice.

The hunter and his helper then return home late in the evening, secretly so that no one may see them and in order to escape the danger of someone's evil eye. The hunter and his helper both are joyfully welcomed in their families, where everyone gives thanks and praise to the deity of the hunt for their success. A clean pot with water from which no one has drunk is placed on the fire to boil the meat. When it is ready to eat, the family sits down to supper. The eating itself has a sacramental character and is accompanied by the precaution that not even the smallest piece of meat is dropped on the floor. The bones of the animal are carefully cleaned, put together and preserved. The horns are given as a thank-offering to the *Khati*, or are preserved at home.

We have given above a description of the individual hunt as practiced by the Svans, where the hunter goes alone or is accompanied only by his assistant, who takes no active part in the hunt itself. But there are other hunting expeditions in Svanetia

[9] Margiani: 70-71.

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224 476 in which many hunters take part. In such cases, if only one of the hunters kills an animal, he gets the head, neck and pelt, while the remainder is divided equally among them all, with the assistant of the man who killed the animal having the right to choose his portion according to his own taste.

224 476 675 There is another interesting hunting custom among the Svans. When two hunters meet while hunting, if the meeting is spontaneous and not pre-arranged, they may enter into a mutual agreement with the Svan words, *sev esh'khvi*, meaning "one success." After this the fulfillment of the agreement is binding on both of them and has the character of a legal contract. They are thus obliged to divide the spoils of the hunt equally, even if it is killed by only one of them.

They hunt separately all day and meet again in the evening at the place agreed upon. The division of the spoil is not obligatory at the second meeting if the agreement was not concluded at the first, as established by custom, but the successful hunter may "treat" his partner with a portion of meat if he wishes to do so.

224 776 171 Besides the Svans, the other groups of Georgian Highlanders—the Khevsurs, Pshavs, and Tushes—believe in the existence of spirits and protectors of game and hunters. These spirits are called *angelozi*.

Similar beliefs are found among other groups in the Georgian nation as well as among other peoples in the Caucasus, such as the Abkhazes, Ossetes, Circassians, and others.

Thus the Georgians of Megrelia[10] believe in the existence of the "Queen of the Forest," called *Tgashi mapa*, and represented as a beautiful woman with long hair. She is regarded as the patroness of all wild animals, and on her good will depends the success of the hunter. The Abkhazians have a patron of all game called *Ajvepsha*.[11]

224 198 171 It should be noted that in addition to the belief in the existence of forest deities and spirits which protect wild animals, some of the people of the Caucasus possess also a secret hunting language.

[10] Teptsov: b, 12.
[11] Zvanbai: Kavkaz, 81-2.

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This point is discussed by J. Potocki,[12] J. Reineggs,[13] J. Klaproth,[14] Lulie,[15] A. Dirr,[16] and others. The secret language of hunters, as used by the Abkhazians, was recorded by A. Dirr, and that of the Circassians has been recorded by all the other writers named above.

A contract of partnership among the Georgian Highlanders, similar to that described in the account of the hunting expeditions, is practiced also in their field work. In the eastern part of Georgia, partnerships are formed for the ploughing of fields, because the ploughing in that part of the country demands considerable expense and depends upon the nature of the ground and the construction of the plow itself, which is cumbersome and requires many hands and animals.

In the eastern part of Georgia the cultivation of land is very expensive. Thus, in order to operate a plow it is necessary to have eight ploughmen, ten pair of oxen, five or six workmen, and many other things. Therefore, only wealthy people are in position to accomplish this work without assistance. The people who are unable to do this because of their limited material resources, find a way out of the difficulty by forming a partnership for the execution of the work. One home supplies the plow-shred, called *sakveti,* and two pairs of oxen, called *kevari-khari.* Another supplies leather straps, another supplies the driver of the plow, the fourth is the ploughman himself, who also brings two oxen with him, etc. In such a manner a number of homes put together one plow, called in the Georgian, *guthani,* and they plough for everyone who takes part in the partnership, in turn.[17] In Khevsuria and Pshavia, where the land is cultivated with small, light plows, with only two oxen, it may happen that two men will be able to get the necessary things together: each furnishes an ox, and iron parts of the plow are bought jointly by both partners. The same manner of ploughing, as practiced in the eastern part of

[12] Klaproth: b, 381.
[13] Potocki: 168-69.
[14] Dirr.
[15] Lulje.
[16] Reineggs.
[17] Khakhanov: c, 192-95.

G. 245 [251] pomegranates) are grown in abundance. They are preserved in sugar by a boiling-down process. G. 244 Important vegetables are lentils, beans, peas, onions, eggplants, celery, garlic, fennel, mustard and several kinds of cucurbitaceous plants. G. 231 The raising of silkworms is common, especially in the West. Beekeeping is widespread; hollwed-out logs are used as beehives; these are covered against the rain with pieces of bark or straw mats. Honey is also gathered from wild beees. G. 224 Hunting is of some importance in the highlands (deer, rabbits, fowl); it is traditionally engaged in by herdsmen, who take turns watching the herds. G. 226 Fishing is of importance only on the Black Sea coast and on the lower course of the rivers running into it.

G. 231 Because of the lack of pasture land, cattle-breeding is less important in the Georgian lowlands than it is in the mountains. The Georgians keep buffaloes, oxen, pigs, horses, donkeys, mules, goats and sheep. The latter usually are of the fat-tail variety, except among the Svan. G. 233 221 In summer, the herds are taken to the mountain pastures by herdsmen. The herds are led by a billy-goat and are kept together by goats; dogs accompany the herds only as protectors against wolves. To keep the latter at a distance, fires are kept going during the night.

Cattle and sheep breeding have a greater relative importance for the Svan and especially the Pshav and Tush. The latter are predominantly seminomadic herdsmen; the men